

NPEC Notes

Volume I • Issue II

Better Decisions through Better Data

October 1999

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Welcome!

Welcome to the current edition of *NPEC Notes*, the periodic newsletter of the National Postsecondary Education Cooperative. We hope this publication, along with the electronic newsletter (*NPEC in Touch*), and the NPEC Web site (www.nces.ed.gov/npec), will keep you informed of recent activity within the Cooperative. *NPEC Notes* frequently includes a statement from the Chair, a calendar of upcoming meetings and events, and highlights of some of the many NPEC activities involving cooperative members. This issue includes an update on the IPEDS Redesign project and a focus article on the IPEDS Faculty Working Group.

Please feel free to address any questions or offer suggestions for future articles to Communication Coordinator Hans L'Orange at hlorange@sheeo.org or Project Director Nancy Borkow at Nancy_Borkow@ed.gov. We hope you find this information valuable.



Final Report Released on IPEDS Redesign

The NCES Taskforce for IPEDS Redesign, chaired by Samuel Peng, has released their final report and recommendations. This collaborative effort had the goal of redesigning IPEDS into a system that uses modern technology to provide timely, relevant, and high-quality data in a way that is both user and provider friendly. The report has been submitted to Acting Commissioner Gary Phillips for his review and approval. The report is available at the following Web address: <http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/ncestfre/design.html>

Several forces are driving the need for a redesign of the system. The current paper-based system is cumbersome and the result-

ing data aren't always very timely. The data entry, editing, and publishing process takes so long that the data are often more than two years old when they are finally released. Technology has also advanced significantly since the IPEDS system was first developed in 1986. Taking advantage of these advances should improve access to the system for both users and providers. Finally, there are mandated reporting changes required in the postsecondary data surveys, including the new standards for collecting race/ethnicity data and the requirements for reporting in-

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IPEDS Working Group Spotlight

Each issue of *NPEC Notes* will focus on a current NPEC working group and its activities. The IPEDS Faculty Staff Review Working Group is the subject of this issue's Spotlight Section. Chaired by Deb Teeter from the University of Kansas, this group is tackling the difficult issues surrounding comparable reporting of faculty and other postsecondary education employees. Members of the group reflect the diversity of NPEC's cooperative nature with individuals from both public and private institutions, governing boards and coordinating associations, consultants and NCES staff. The group was charged with reviewing the

IPEDS Fall Staff Survey and the IPEDS Salaries, Tenure, and Fringe Benefits of Full-time Instructional Faculty Survey. They were also asked to develop a relationship between these two surveys.

The group discussed several mandates that govern faculty and staff data collection. Collection by occupational categories is mandated along with race/ethnic data, gender, and salary ranges. Data by full- or part-time is not required and data on donated or contracted services also is not mandated.

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Comments from the Chair

By Toni Larson, 1999 NPEC Chair

For the past year, the National Postsecondary Education Cooperative (NPEC) has played a major role in the redesign of the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). Four NPEC working groups—Universe, Student-focus, Faculty/Staff, and Finance, Cost, and Student Financial Aid—have been meeting to suggest needed changes to IPEDS. Another group, comprised of many NPEC members, has developed helpful guidelines for reporting on race and ethnicity designations in response to a recent OMB ruling on the essential categories for data collection. All of this activity emphasizes the value of NPEC and its members to postsecondary education and to the National Center on Education Statistics (NCES), the entity



Toni Larson

primarily responsible for the redesign. The redesign working groups and others established in areas of NPEC emphasis (Student Outcomes, Access, Data Infrastructure and Relationships, and Costs, Finances and Productivity) provide a forum for discussion and collaboration among sectors and interests and for a partnership between postsecondary education and NCES.

This issue of the NPEC newsletter describes some of the various activities being pursued to accomplish the redesign of IPEDS. The goals of the redesign process are to provide more timely and useable data and to comply with mandates found in the Higher Education Act Amendments of 1998 and to be responsive to other federal reporting requirements.

A variety of factors necessitate this comprehensive review and redesign of IPEDS. The system has not been updated in any significant way since 1986. Much has changed since then both within postsecondary education and in the way data can be collected. The existing paper system is cumbersome and time consuming and information is not always as accurate as it might be or available in a timely manner. The almost ubiquitous presence of sophisticated data collection systems suggests the use of these systems to provide more effective and efficient information gathering. Further, policymakers agree that more and different information is needed to better understand postsecondary education and to make more informed policy decisions. Finally, state and federal governments are also requiring more and different information. Thus, it is logical for NPEC, an entity established by Congress to find ways to improve the quality and dissemination of information, and to play a major role in the redesign process. Thank you to everyone who has taken time to participate in this endeavor and to all the supporters of NPEC.

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formation on the price of postsecondary education to undergraduates.

The Taskforce has made several specific recommendations and believe that the implementation of these recommendations will meet data needs, improve data quality and timeliness, and increase the utility of the data. Here is a brief summary of the recommendations listed in their report. Full implementation of these recommendations is predicated on NCES having additional resources in the coming years. Since the full report is complex and detailed, please refer to it for more specifics on each recommendation.

1. IPEDS shall cover all institutions participating in Title IV programs and all non-Title IV postsecondary institutions that are open to the general public.

2. IPEDS shall be organized into three waves of collection based on data availability: October, December, and March. Each collection period will have an eight-week data submission window. Non-Title IV institutions, although not required to respond to these collections, will be encouraged to complete the full set, either electronically or in paper form. If they are

unwilling to submit the full set of data, a minimal set of data will also be accepted.

3a. IPEDS shall use a Web-based system starting in 2000-2001 to collect data with built-in edit and other quality checks. It is anticipated that all Title IV institutions will have Internet capability. For institutions that do not have Internet capability, NCES shall provide special administrative assistance to help process their submission.

3b. The current IPEDS coordination system shall be maintained and the Web-based system shall accommodate current coordination practices.

4a. The October Collection shall collect Institutional Characteristics (IC), Price, and Completions data. Suggested additional IC items include questions on admissions selectivity and freshmen profile data. Additional Completions data will include detailed information on double majors.

4b. The December Collection shall collect enrollments, staff data, and faculty salaries. There will also be some additional data collected including non-credit activity. The survey of Fall Enrollments in Occupationally Specific Programs has been recommended for deletion.

4c. The March Collection shall collect data on student financial aid, institutional finances, and graduation rates.

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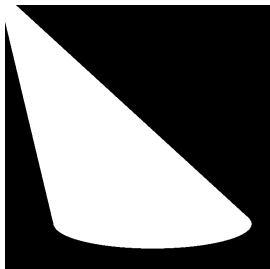
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Working Group Spotlight

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The Working Group discussed a number of concerns related to collecting data on faculty and staff. These include institutional response time, the vagueness that exists around occupational category definitions, conceptual differences in the definition of faculty between different NCES and national surveys, and the challenge of trying to collect data about the variety of activities in which faculty are engaged.

Discussions identified short-term or “stop gap” issues and long-term issues. Short-term concerns included accommodating a plethora of institutional definitions of faculty and greater specificity in definition of staff categories, particularly administrative/managerial, to improve comparability across institutions. Longer-term issues include the need to collect salary data on part-time faculty and examining the need to collect data by discipline. Another long-term concern is the quantification of faculty effort (total contract months) rela-



tive to activity measures (e.g., student credit hours).

The group has gathered input from a variety of sources. A group discussion at the AIR Winter Colloquium reviewed this issue and AAUP ran a pilot test to gather data on part-time faculty and the range of salaries paid to these individuals by research universities. Feedback was also gathered at the AIR Forum in June and various data exchange groups.

The Working Group has proposed a series of matrices and guidelines to help institutions provide data consistent with institutional definitions of faculty. In addition, the matrices will increase the analytical ability to compare populations across institutions. The proposed matrices will first be used to categorize employees. Then additional data (e.g., race/ethnicity, salary ranges, etc.) can be collected about the various populations. Separate matrices are being proposed for full-time employees (matrix 1) and part-time employees (matrix 2). Data on medical schools will be collected separately on matrix 1 and matrix 2. Employees are as-

signed to matrices 1 and 2 by faculty and tenure status or non-faculty and by functional/ occupational categories. Matrix 3 captures who is teaching regardless of title or funding source for the prior fall term.

All paid employees should be included in one and only one cell in matrices 1 and 2 even if they are employed in multiple ways. Counts should be made from a frozen snapshot of human resources/payroll data. Employees in matrix 3 (teaching matrix) should be assigned to a cell based on the employee's status with the institution and not their teaching status (e.g., a full-time administrator who teaches part-time is counted in a cell for administrators).

Definitions for filling the matrices have been drafted. The Working Group is reviewing them and they will be posted on the AIR Web site with the matrices and with some questions to elicit information about how institutions currently and prefer to respond to employee and salary IPEDS questions.

If the recommendations of the working group are accepted and incorporated into IPEDS, the changes would not be fully implemented until the Fall of 2003.

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4d. For the minimal data set (see recommendation 2 above), NCES shall focus on directory information and basic institutional characteristics.

4e. NCES shall continue working with institutions to develop and select new items that are relevant and useful to institutions.

5. NCES shall adopt the 16 race/ethnic categories recommended for aggregate reporting by the NPEC/NCES/NSF Policy Panel on Racial/Ethnic Reporting.

6a. NCES shall adopt the framework for reporting institutional employee data recommended by the NPEC Working Group on Faculty. Faculty status and an occupational/functional category would classify all employees.

6b. NCES shall continue to explore a measure of instructional activity/workload.

7. NCES shall develop and maintain a peer analysis system to facilitate comparative analyses of IPEDS data, a Web page for consumer information about each institution, and a system to select and link

data from various components of IPEDS for statistical analyses.

8. NCES shall employ multiple approaches to maintain effective communication with institution chief executive officers, institution and state IPEDS data providers, and data users.

9a. NCES shall provide Help Desk support during each data collection period.

9b. NCES shall provide administrative assistance to institutions that do not have access to the Internet or the capacity to provide data through the Web-based system.

9c. NCES shall conduct or support training workshops for institution and state IPEDS coordinators to become fully conversant with the Web-based system.

9d. NCES shall develop an on-line tutorial program for data providers to get answers or instructions for performing certain tasks with the Web-based system.

9e. NCES shall establish an IPEDS Fellows Program.

10a. NCES shall support NPEC's initiative to coordinate and collaborate with other major PSE data developers to reduce the overall response burden to institutions.

10b. NCES shall support the Voluntary Institution On-Line Information Network (VIOLIN), to reduce the overall response burden to institutions and to provide a more complete database for institutional peer analysis.

11. NCES shall adopt a process of continuous improvement for the IPEDS system.

The new data items and reporting format will be phased in over three years so that institutions will have sufficient lead time to change their data collection systems. The Taskforce recommends moving to a full Web-based collection in the 2000-2001 survey year. Content changes to the IC survey would be incorporated in 2000-2001 and the new race/ethnic categories would also be added in that year but as optional items. Most of the other new items would be incorporated as optional items in 2001-2002 but no new items would be required until the 2002-2003 survey year. The new race/ethnicity categories for the Completions and Staff surveys and the new CIP codes would not be required until 2003-2004.

Short Notes

NPEC Council Meeting Date Change

The NPEC Council meeting dates have been shifted by one day. The meeting will begin on the afternoon of Monday, November 1st and run through November 3rd. This shift will allow some attendees to avoid traveling on Sunday, which coincidentally is Halloween and the end of Daylight Savings time. All Council members are invited to the Hyatt Regency on Capital Hill for a series of formal presentations and updates on NPEC activity.

Patrick Callan to Deliver Council Keynote

Patrick M. Callan, the president of The National Center on Public Policy and Higher Education (<http://www.highereducation.org>) has agreed to present the keynote speech at the NPEC Council Meeting. Mr. Callan's Center is working with a number of organizations to release reports on the condition of postsecondary education. One of his Center's current efforts is a

report card of state by state postsecondary indicators. At the NPEC meeting, Mr. Callan will speak about the economic, political, and social trends likely to influence postsecondary education in the next twenty years.

VIOLIN Under Consideration

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) is investigating the possibility of supporting the creation of a national voluntary database to supplement data from IPEDS. The Voluntary Institutional On-Line Information Network (VIOLIN), currently unfunded, would be integrated with the new Web-based IPEDS database and use the same procedures, peer-analysis tools, and training. The objectives of this system would be to facilitate peer analysis, reduce institutional reporting burdens and encourage research relating to postsecondary education. If funded, such a database would be developed and administered independently of NCES, under a grant procedure through the Association for Institutional Research (AIR).

CIP Codes Under Review

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) has completed a draft version of its updated Classification of Instruc-

tional Programs (CIP-2000). The CIP-2000 is the first update to the CIP taxonomy in ten years and recognizes the substantive changes in program classifications, scope, and content that have occurred in postsecondary institutions. This draft version of the CIP is being distributed for public comment only; the program classification and information contained in the draft should not be used for data collection or reporting purposes. All comments should be submitted by October 15, 1999. The draft can be found at <http://nces.ed.gov/npec/paperscipPreface.html>.

Technology and Its Ramifications for Data Systems

Look for a summary article based on the NPEC publication "Technology and Its Ramifications for Data Systems" in the EDUCAUSE journal CAUSE/EFFECT, Volume 22 Number 2, 1999. It is an adaptation of the report published by the Subcommittee on the Policy Panel on Technology, chaired by Virginia McMillan, Executive Vice President, Illinois Community College Board. An electronic version of the summary article can be found at <http://www.educause.edu/ir/library/html/cem9921.html>.

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